DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 123 CE 008 672

TITLE	"Options in Education." Transcript for Program Scheduled for Broadcast the Week of August 2, 1976: Schooling and Jobs--Part I.
INSTITUTION	George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C. Inst. for Educational Leadership.; National Public Radio, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	20p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal reproducibility of the original document. For related documents, see CE 008 673-677
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	College Graduates; Discussion Programs; Educational Alternatives; Educational Policy; Educational Radio; Employment; Employment Opportunities; *Employment Potential; Employment Problems; Job Satisfaction; Policy Formation; *Relevance (Education); *Underemployed; Undergraduate Students; Vocational Adjustment; *Work Attitudes; Work Experience
IDENTIFIERS	United States

ABSTRACT

Underemployment is the focus of this transcript of a radio series published as an electronic weekly magazine concerned with issues in education. The first of a 2-part series, this program incorporates studio interviews with: James O'Toole of the Center for the Study of the Future; a ceramics college graduate working as a shipping clerk; various college students concerning their career expectations; Albert Sussman, the dean of a school of graduate studies; and a former member of the graduate student government. The concept of underemployment, job satisfaction, and attitudes and expectations about work are discussed. Attention is also given to the need for a revision in America's concepts of schooling and jobs, and the prospects of Ph.D. candidates facing underemployment. (TA)

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ED130123

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

TRANSCRIPT FOR PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST

THE WEEK OF AUGUST 2, 1976

Program No. 40

National Public Radio

Options in Education

2025 M Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036

202-785-6462

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The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Acting Producer is JoEllyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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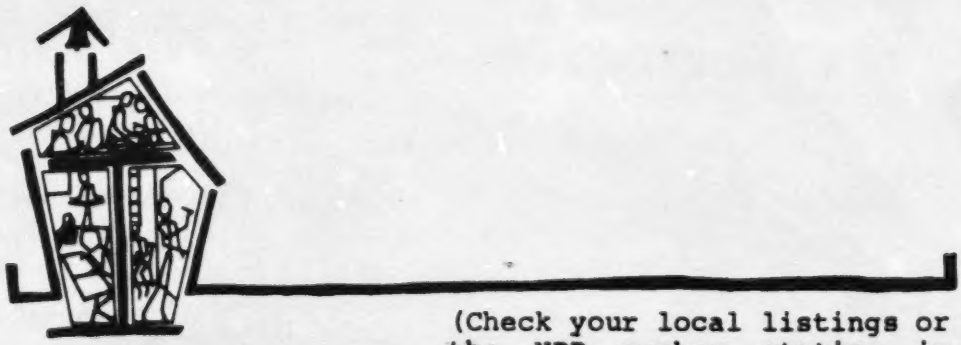
OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership at The George Washington University.

Principal support is provided by a grant from the National Institute of Education. Additional funds are provided by the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Office of Education, the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.



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Contact: Ms. S. Gay Kinney
Public Information
(202) 785-6462

SCHOOLING AND JOBS

PART I

(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

("GET A JOB" - by the SILHOUETTES)

MERROW: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education -- from the ABC's of preschool to the alphabet soup of government programs. This is John Merrow. In this special series, we ask the question about schooling and jobs -- Can you get there from here?

GOLDMAN: How would you describe yourself by the things you do?

LAWYER: Well, I'm a lawyer. So, I'm a paper-pusher. I push a ton of paper.

CIVIL SERVANT: I work for the government, but my vocation is rowing. I'm a sports fanatic.

SECRETARY: I'm in Secretarial work. I work in an office. Regular office work. Like everybody else.

PHOTOGRAPHER: I'm a photographer, and I express my feelings through my photography.

PSYCHIATRIST: I'm in psychiatry, and I guess it's essentially trying to allow, permit, people to find themselves, and to be more "together" within themselves.

INVENTOR: I'm an inventor.

WRITER: Well, I'm a writer. You know, I think and I type. I'm an articulate typist.

DAVID ENSOR: This is David Ensor. One way we define ourselves is by the work we do. As Reporter Connie Goldman just demonstrated, we very often judge our own value by what society is willing to pay us for the work we do. Now, that's fine if you're a doctor, lawyer, or in some other high-paying, high-status occupation. But not so good if you shine shoes or pick vegetables.

MERROW: Things must have been simpler in the old days, David. Then, only the rich and privileged went on to college and -- simply going to college was, itself, pretty much a guarantee of a good job. Now, we're well into the noble experiment of mass education, and about 60% of each year's graduating high school seniors are continuing their education -- either in two-year colleges, trade or technical schools, or four-year colleges. By and large, high schools are geared to serve that college population, but that, in itself, creates problems because it gives the short end of the stick to the 40% who aren't going on to school after high school.

DAVID ENSOR: I can demonstrate the second part of the problem with a riddle: What do Caroline Kennedy, Susand Ford and Steven Ford have in common? One answer is, of course, that they're children of presidents. But there's another link. All three are college drop-outs -- young people who have decided, at least for the moment, that college doesn't fit into their plans. The world knows that Caroline Kennedy is studying art in London; Susan Ford is taking pictures in Colorado; and brother Steven is learning to bust broncos on the West Coast. But you may not know that half of those entering college will

drop out before graduation. That's over eight hundred thousand dropouts a year.

MERROW: And they are joining the high-school graduates and the high-school dropouts in the marketplace -- looking for work at a time when the national unemployment rate is roughly ten percent.

ENSOR: Because of this situation, some widely held views are under attack. First is the notion that nearly everyone should go to college; second is the idea that "college pays". In fact, it may not pay to go to college -- at least, in terms of more dollars earned.

MERROW: It still pays for bank robbers, though. There's a study showing that those who rob banks by means of sophisticated computer schemes get away with twice as big a haul as those who use the conventional, "stick-em-up" approach. We need more evidence than this to prove that education pays, but nevertheless, college enrollment reached an all-time high of eleven million three hundred thousand students this Fall, and is likely to go even higher in the immediate future.

ENSOR: Analysts looking at the problem find a cycle of more and more college-trained people applying for fewer and fewer jobs that actually call for a college education. And accompanying that, an ever larger army of young dropouts, who were trained to go to school -- but aren't. It's social dynamite, according to James O'Toole of the Center for the Study of the Future, in California. Professor O'Toole, author of Work in America and The Reserve Army of the Underemployed, talks here with my colleague, John Merrow.

MERROW: Jim, your monograph is called The Reserve Army of the Underemployed. That idea of underemployment ... would you explain what you mean by that?

PROFESSOR JAMES O'TOOLE

O'TOOLE: Well, economists have different definitions for this term, and I'll just give you the definition that I use; not the ones that they would all accept or use. Underemployment is the under-utilization of human talents, skills, training, ability, education -- an in effect, under-utilization of human resources. And, it is my contention that this is becoming a chronic or lasting problem in western industrial societies. Unemployment, which is clearly something that's very painful, has at least the one saving grace that it's cyclical -- that is, unemployment rates do go up and down; they tend not to stay high or to stay low for any period of time. The problem of underemployment, though, seems to be growing and will continue to grow ... we can't see that this will be cyclical and will reverse itself, so I feel that underemployment may come to characterize the problems of our work force in a much more painful manner -- even than will unemployment.

MERROW: So by "underemployment", then, you mean really that the job doesn't ask enough of the person who's doing the job? The job's too dumb?

O'TOOLE: That's a pretty good way of putting it, I think. The worker just feels that he deserves better -- that he can handle a lot more, that his training and his intelligence is not being used -- that, if he could have more challenge, more responsibility -- he could handle it; he could give a lot more to the organization or to the employer than he's currently giving. When someone says "My talents are being wasted on this job", that's a pretty good characterization of the fact that the person is probably underemployed. Now, whether the person is under-

employed or not, is something that is very hard to measure. What is important, I think, is whether the person perceives that he's underemployed. If you feel that your talents are being wasted, that, perhaps, is more important than if they actually are -- because then it leads to frustration, and it leads to all kinds of problems with morale, and eventually to lower productivity.

MERROW: That's interesting. You're saying that the notion of lower productivity ... in your book, you mention that studies show that the sabotage and the accidents that occur in factories -- that it's the underemployed workers -- the brighter workers who aren't sufficiently challenged -- they're the ones who apparently are more responsible.

O'TOOLE: Well, the data on this is very weak -- and I got into a lot of trouble with that study. The author has backed down on his original claims. But I think that the argument, though, is worth thinking about for a minute, because if we look at the work that Ivor Berg and others have done -- it seems to support this notion. And let me just backtrack for a second to try to explain it. We always assumed that by up-grading the skills of the worker, that the worker would be more productive; that is, if you have a worker with a high-school education, he would be less productive than a worker with a college education -- and this is a basic assumption of economists and of managers in our society ... that we've constantly upgraded the credential requirements for jobs. Berg and others have looked at this, and they found that just the opposite seems to happen -- that if you don't change the nature of the job, but you upgrade the credential requirements, you tend to get lower productivity from the workers. Now, this happens for several reasons.

First of all, if you have a person with a high-school education who ends up say, in a middle managerial job -- he'll be terribly satisfied; his expectations were met, he'll say "This is a pretty good job for a guy like me. I never expected I could go so far." And he'll work very, very hard and very diligently. But if you take someone with a college education, who's expecting to be President of the company, and he ends up in a middle-level managerial job, he'll say "What a failure I am ... they don't appreciate me." He'll become frustrated, and he won't work as hard, and he'll cause all kinds of trouble.

Now, if we look at what happens on the shop floor ... something is quite interesting here. If you look at the data on the IQ's of workers, we find an extremely high number of blue-collar workers and laborers with very, very high IQ's. There's something like a third more blue-collar workers have IQ's over 130 than do college professors. Of course, any of you who've been in a faculty meeting won't be too surprised by those numbers, but clearly, there were more blue-collar workers than there are college professors. But what is important here, is that among blue-collar workers, we have a rather normal distribution of a kind of curve -- normal distribution of intelligence, which means that the average is one hundred. Well, we design the jobs for the lowest common denominator; we design them to be ...

MERROW: Like television.

O'TOOLE: Yea ... goof -- we say "goof-proof" in management. You assume that the worker's an idiot, and you design the job so that they can't foul it up.

MERROW: Which means that half of your workers are going to find themselves in jobs that are too dumb for them -- that they're much too smart for.

O'TOOLE: If you set it for the level of sixty, it will be more than half. We have the situation, then, that a lot of very intelligent blue-collar workers are on dumb jobs. And there are clearly some dumb blue-collar workers on dumb jobs, too. Now, I think that we probably

can't worry too much about those people.

MERROW: But the former group are underemployed.

O'TOOLE: I would say they're underemployed, and I would phrase it that they are the ones who are dissatisfied with work, and there are some studies that offer indirect evidence that these people -- they start assuming that they're in "dead-end" jobs. When people complain -- when blue-collar workers complain that they're in "dead-end" jobs, their levels of frustration rise, and according to work that was done by my colleague, Harold Sheppard, these are people who tend to want some kind of continuing education; they want to get out of this bind that they're in -- they're also people who seem to have to transfer their hatred and their frustration on to radical political causes -- and there's some other evidence to show that these people cannot achieve their desire to learn and to grow in their leisure activities. They're so destroyed in the job -- the job so beat them down that they go home and all they want to do is end up watching television. So, I think that we do have this resource -- this human resource -- these very intelligent workers that we're not fully tapping.

MERROW: Studs Terkel quotes a lady as, "Most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirits", which I guess is what you're talking about when you mention underemployed people or the unemployed self. I wonder, Jim, if you hold the view that we have a right to job satisfaction -- that's a basic right.

O'TOOLE: Well, that's a very difficult question. I would be rather reluctant to add any more rights to the rights we already seem to have; part of our problem in society is this question of entitlement. We feel that more and more factors -- more and more things that used to be privileges are now rights.

I would argue, though, still saying that -- that in a way, it certainly is a right for a person to have a job that does not demean him. I think that a job that destroys a person so that the person, as I was referring to a few minutes earlier, cannot effectively go home and take part in community activities, and a person can't go home and re-create himself -- if the person is so destroyed on the job that there's no other life left for that person, then I would argue that that is probably an infringement of basic human rights. How one goes about correcting that, I don't know -- it's not altogether -- I don't pretend to have the answer to that, but I think that employers have in the past maybe a very false assumption, and that is that worker's morale and their lives are kind of a free good, and that the employer could take the worker on to the job and just destroy that person, physically and mentally -- and then foam out the community at night and assume that that was his right to do it, and that there were no costs. There is a kind of psychological pollution that goes with the industrial pollution -- the employers assume that they can take the air and the water as free goods, and send it back to the community befouled, and what they do is take the worker in and pollute his mind, and destroy him so that he is not an effective member of the community -- and send him out, and that is their right. Now I don't believe that is the right of employers.

ENSOR: We'll hear more in a moment from James O'Toole, author of the HEW report called Work In America and The Reserve Army of the Underemployed.

JULIE BAXTER

BAXTER: My name is Julie Baxter. I went to Catholic University, studying ceramics, and I now work at Georgetown Leather Design as a shipping clerk.

ENSOR: Julie Baxter, the shipping clerk, spent four years in college. Was it a waste of time? She discovered that she enjoys making pottery.

BAXTER: I think I've changed a whole lot since I decided to go to college. I mean, I don't know ... I don't think I'd ever even thought of working with clay at all when I was a senior in high school. It comes from, I guess, the last four years. I watched this one lady teach, and I was just ... I'd seen it done before, but watching this one woman -- who I'd like to apprentice from soon, I just couldn't believe it, you know -- like she had one hand, an arm in a sling, and she was just throwing with the other one ... it was just like magic!

ENSOR: But now she's a shipping clerk. Listen as she describes her working day, and her hopes for the future.

BAXTER: Basically, I'm a shipping clerk. I just received their garments and items that are made downstairs -- bags, and schlep them up in the plastic bags, and receive them -- write it up, get -- if there is anything for wholesale to get shipped, I ship it. I mean, it's nothing -- my job is not overly impressive; it's not taxing at all, I have to make up work a lot of time to look busy, because they like you to look busy, but they won't give you the time off. You know, like, I'd rather only work three days a week and hustle for three days and have the other time off, but that's not the way it is. They like you to be here all five days, and look busy -- and, I don't work too fast. After I have my coffee, by that time, everybody -- and have done a little work, other people have come in ... talk to them for awhile ... major conversation is what they're going to do for the day, you know -- nothing ... I mean, everybody's talking about lunch at 10:30 ... everybody's in the same boat I am.

I feel frustrated. It's all such "busy" work. You get to feel like a worker ant, and then why? Why do you do it? At one point, I needed the money, but now I don't need the money -- so I'm leaving. I have enough money to live without them until I become a success! I'm gonna use my college education. I guess I'm going to be working in ceramics, but I haven't been using my education at all; I mean, what is there to use? I walk in in the morning ... I never have to think; I could have had a lobotomy and conducted my job in the same way -- I don't need to think, being there at all -- and they don't -- you almost get the impression they don't want you to, anyway. There's nothing -- there are no taxing problems -- there is nothing to think about. Back when I was throwing in school -- throwing pots on my wheel ... I had developed a rhythm then, and without the rhythm, you can't get the life in the pots, and -- I come home from work now, and just too beat to throw ... but, college seems like an absurd place to learn about ceramics. It doesn't -- not that I -- you know, I think it's great that they taught it and everything, but I don't think it was necessary -- I don't think it's necessary for me to even have a B.A. in art. For ceramics? It doesn't say, you know ... "B.A. Potter" ... who needs it? I don't think a B.A. is important, personally, but there's no market for you in today's society -- there's just nothing you can do; I mean, like there's commercial art ... but my interests went elsewhere, so ... It's just proof that you know more than somebody else, that's all it is, and you know, like how many degrees you stack behind you. And I don't think I need the proof.

ENSOR: Julie Baxter doesn't think she needs the proof that a college degree represents ... but Julie learned about ceramics in college; not in high school, on television or at home. Then, armed with a college degree, she became a shipping clerk. There are millions of Americans in Julie Baxter's shoes. Too tired after eight hours in a boring job to re-create themselves in their leisure time. Julie Baxter's probably typical in another way, too. Because she's a college graduate, she -- and the rest of society, expect more from her, and she expects a good job. And even if the "good" in good job is a relative term, we do

know that there aren't enough good jobs to go around. Let's listen in on more of John Merrow's conversation with James O'Toole.

MERROW: There's simply not enough good jobs for everyone who thinks he deserves one. Why is that? Why aren't there enough good jobs?

O'TOOLE: It's very difficult to talk about the supply of jobs. You can't make a statement that there are not enough good jobs, period. Because you get into the whole area of attitudes and expectations that a good job for someone with an IQ of 30 -- might be cleaning toilets. The person might find that as challenging and rewarding and about as interesting as any kind of work that he or she could do. Now, on the other hand -- if you look at the other end of the spectrum of intelligence, if you get someone who has an IQ of 150, that person might even be bored being a radio announcer, for example.

MERROW: Oh, I can't believe that!

O'TOOLE: What would appear to be a good job for most people still might not be stimulating for a person who's very bright and who had quite a bit of education and in particular -- who had very high expectations. The key aspect of what I was talking about there when I said there aren't enough jobs to go around for everyone who thinks he deserves one is the issue of attitudes and expectations.

MERROW: That's what determines a good job, then?

O'TOOLE: Yes ... and what has happened in the labor force is that a growing portion of the force is now expecting better and better jobs. That is, because people are better educated, because they've had a great degree of affluence -- because their security needs are met; that is, that they don't worry about if they don't work that they're going to starve to death ... none of their friends are starving to death -- if you're a college graduate, that they can constantly expect more from work, and I think that educational institutions have done a great disservice, I would say, in fostering these very high expectations; that is ...

MERROW: You make it sound like progress is it's own worst enemy.

O'TOOLE: Well ... I don't think that it's progress that we're talking about, necessarily. I think that it certainly is progress that people aren't starving to death and it certainly is progress that people have better security, and that we managed to get through this recession without having a depression. But it's not progress when people with unreal expectations are fostered by society ... when young people are told -- you go to college, you get a degree, and you go out and get a good job and a well-paying job, and ... The University of California even had a time where they had billboards around the state saying that a college education is worth -- I don't know, three hundred thousand dollars a year, or whatever the figure was at that time, given the rate of inflation since then ... it was probably worth a million dollars in 1975 dollars.

MERROW: If you can get a job.

O'TOOLE: And, so ... young people went to school with the expectation that they were going to get a good job and a well-paying job, and this is an "Open Sesame" to success ...

MERROW: But Jim ... let me interrupt ... wasn't that true ten years ago when people were saying go to school, and so on and so forth?

O'TOOLE: Yes, I think for a time it was true. And I think that in certain stages of economic development of a nation, it's going to be true in any country. At certain stages, it's not. It's not in the

country that's way under-developed that has massive and acute unemployment, as they have in India and Africa. What happens there is the college graduates grow up and they end up standing on the street corners looking for a job. It seems to be true at a certain level of development. Clearly, it was in the fifties and in the sixties in the U.S. it was true ... but some things have happened, now, that the nature of the work force has changed -- the nature of demand has changed, and it is no longer true today. Some recent studies done by a team of researchers at Harvard and MIT show that the relative economic advantage of going to college has all but disappeared. There's a very small, minor advantage over those who don't go to college.

MERROW: Explain what that means.

O'TOOLE: Well, it means that in the past, if you went to college, your lifetime income would be something like three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand dollars higher than someone who only had a high school diploma. Today, because of a rather depressed demand for college graduates, and also, because a lot of blue collar workers -- particularly skilled union workers, are making very high salaries -- that that difference has all but disappeared.

MERROW: Now, when you figure something like that, I assume that you first have to figure that -- well, you're going away to college for four years; therefore, you're giving up four years of income, and you're also investing four years of tuition and fees, and so that then you have to calculate ... well, when I get out of college, how much more will I make? Are people actually making those calculations ... are seventeen year olds, eighteen year olds actually making those calculations, do you suppose?

O'TOOLE: Well, I don't agree with economists ... feel that there is, as they say, a Scotsman in each of us who is constantly making these kinds of irrational decisions ... I don't buy it for a moment. But, young people didn't have to make those calculations because they were made for them. The billboard was there ... in the subway, if you could recall, there were signs saying "Don't drop out ... it will ruin your chances of getting a good job." So the young people were told by their parents, by their teachers ... by people in government, by their ministers --and everyone else, that they had to go on to college and stay in school and not drop out, and it was an investment in their future. And I think that that is the key concept for us to think about -- and that is, education has been viewed in and has been sold as an investment. Now, I would rather think of it in terms of what economists call "consumption good"; that is, that the reason why one persues higher education is because, presumably, one thirsts after knowledge -- one wants to become well-rounded, one is curious about what's happening in the world, education is important in terms of providing the skills for citizenship, the skills for coping with life, the skills needed to have a successful family life, to raise children, to participate in community activities -- the leisure time type skills that are going to become much more important in the future. The education is something that we do for all these things.

Now, it also has -- clearly, and indirect relevance to work, in that the skills that most employers seem to want -- or, being able to read and write and compute and to get along with other people, and to cope with change -- and all those things, and education has an indirect value there, too -- but it's not a direct value; it's not that direct "dollars and cents" payoff that young people were led to believe that was there over the last two decades.

ENSOR: James O'Toole talking with John Merrow. O'Toole says that while a college education may not pay off in direct dollar gains, education itself is a sound investment because there's more to life than work. Rising expectations -- what workers and students expect from

their jobs are hard to measure. We sent reporter Keith Talbot to a local college library. There, he discovered a lot of students hard at work. He interrupted a number of them to ask about their job expectations.

KEITH TALBOT AT LOCAL COLLEGE LIBRARY

STUDENT: I'm a student at American University law school in Washington, D.C., and I'm studying law.

TALBOT: Do you think from what you're learning in school now, you'll be able to get a job?

STUDENT: Possibly, not the type job that I want initially when I get out, but after going through a few jobs -- hopefully, I'll get the job that I want, which is a position in a law firm -- not a big one, but something like where I would have some responsibility and apply some of the things I learned.

STUDENT: I'm a student at Georgetown University in pre-med -- in psychology and English.

TALBOT: Do you think you'll be able to get a job from what you're learning in school now?

STUDENT: If I go to graduate school and medical school.

TALBOT: You think you'll get the job that you want?

STUDENT: Sure. After medical school, I think that you basically do kind of get the job you want, you know?

ENSOR: Others who are spending their vacations in the library profess to be relatively unconcerned about future employment.

STUDENT: I'm a student at Clark University in western Massachusetts, and I'm studying Biology.

TALBOT: From what you're studying now, do you think you'll be able to get a job?

STUDENT: Well, I don't expect -- that's not what I'm there for, to get a job -- I'm not goal oriented. I'm not a pre-professional student; I'm there for the education.

STUDENT: I'm a student at American University, and I'm studying literature -- and I don't think I'm going to get a job from my education.

TALBOT: Does that ... is that a disappointment -- were you planning on getting a job from what you're learning?

STUDENT: Not really ... no.

STUDENT: I go to school at Antioch in Yellow Springs, Ohio. I'm studying environmental studies.

TALBOT: Do you think you'll be able to get a job from what you're studying in school now?

STUDENT: Probably not ... but that's not my goal, cause I'd like to work on my own farm somewhere.

TALBOT: Why are you going to school then?

STUDENT: To learn about environmental studies, and plant nutrition -- so that I can know myself later on about those things while I'm living on my farm.

TALBOT: OK ... you have an independent source of income?

STUDENT: No ... I'll figure it out later.

STUDENT: I go to school at the University of Michigan -- Ann Arbor. I'm studying political science ... who knows if I can get a job?

TALBOT: You don't think you'll be able to get a job when you get out of school?

STUDENT: I'm working on my doctorate, so I have no idea.

TALBOT: Why do you go to school then?

STUDENT: Ah ...

TALBOT: A very typical answer. What else do you want to do?

ENSOR: The young man working on his PHD thesis may be in for a real jolt when he finishes school -- because the more schooling, the fewer jobs. That's a "Catch-22" to rival the original. Many students get their Bachelor's degrees, discover that they cannot step into what they see as a good job, and so go on to graduate school. But when they complete the Master's degree or PHD, they're worse off because they are now over-qualified for most jobs -- and the competition for the appropriate positions is brutal. But most of the students that reporter Talbot talked with seemed aware of the job situation in their chosen fields -- and were willing to go the extra mile or wait the extra year to land the kind of job they want.

STUDENT: I'm a student at Whitenberg University, and I'm ...

TALBOT: What?

STUDENT: Whitenberg. It's in Springfield, Ohio. And I'm studying music therapy, and ..

TALBOT: Do you think you'll be able to get a job from what you're learning in school?

STUDENT: Yea. Either as a teacher in college or actually working with children.

STUDENT: I'm a student at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, and I'm studying physical education.

TALBOT: Do you think from what you're learning in school now, you'll be able to get a job?

STUDENT. No, I dont. Because the field is very tight right now -- all of teaching is, pretty much so.

TALBOT: So what are you going to school for?

STUDENT: To get a degree, and -- hopefully, work some other kind of job until I find one in physical education that I want.

STUDENT: I'm a student at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and I'm studying electronics.

TALBOT: Do you think you'll be able to get a job from what you're learning in school now?

STUDENT: I think so.

TALBOT: Are you confident about it?

STUDENT: Yea, pretty sure. There's been an uprise in the need for majors in electronics -- Masters ...

STUDENT: I go to Genesee State University system in New York. I'm a Speech and Hearing Major -- and yes, I think I can get a job.

TALBOT: There are positions available?

STUDENT: Not a lot ... but they are there. You have to look for them. You have to travel for them ... they're there.

ENSOR: College students talking about their job expectations with reporter Keith Talbot. What those jobs are actually like may come as a surprise because in all likelihood, they haven't had much on-the-job experience. What's more, they'll probably change jobs quite a number of times, and end up doing something they never dreamed of doing -- let alone train for. The average worker holds down seven jobs in a lifetime -- and the greater the education, the greater the job mobility. James O'Toole has looked at schooling and at jobs, and he thinks both are in need of an overhaul.

JAMES O'TOOLE

O'TOOLE: We need a type of dual policy here -- a policy that affects the workplace and a policy that affects the schools. The policy that affects the schools, I think, can be stated rather simply -- that we have to do things to break the expectation that the college degree is a passport to a good job. We have to say it's not an investment. There are other things that can be done -- we can talk about those later. But, in terms of the workplace, many things can be done to make work more challenging and more interesting than it currently is.

In the report Work In America, we outlined several of these, and there is much recent research that shows that work can be redesigned; most jobs can be redesigned to make them more interesting and rewarding -- to increase the intrinsic rewards from the job. Now, I must say that there are limitations to this. There are some jobs -- that for very bright people, you can never make them interesting. But for most jobs if you do things like have the workers involved in decision-making, if you provide workers with the chance to learn new -- constantly learning new skills and new tasks to learn how to do the jobs of the other people that they work with ... to put tools for self-management in the hands of the workers -- that it will be more interesting and more rewarding.

MERROW: You seem to be saying that these demands that a better educated populace are making are legitimate demands -- it's necessary for the workplace to change ... for there to be more intrinsic satisfaction in jobs.

O'TOOLE: I like very much the way you phrased that question -- that it's necessary for a workplace to change, and I think it is. Because the alternative is cutting back on education. Now, it is clear that if you educate people, you increase their thirst for learning and for growth. Now, what we have -- a situation in this country, and also, it's occurring in most of the industrialized countries of the world -- it's not just an American phenomenon by any stretch of the imagination. But we have the case where we have more and more young people coming out of school with these higher expectations. You have only a couple of choices here. One, is you can say, "we will cut back on higher education; we will limit access to higher education; we will limit the number of people who can go to college to a number of people whose jobs actually require that education." Now, they do this in the Soviet Union and other places, and I would say -- at an intolerable cost to freedom and to opportunity -- and even to equality, which is presumably the primary goal of the Soviet system.

But we can either cut back on education, which I would say is impossible. Once you open the door to education, you can't close it

because education is viewed in this country more -- increasingly viewed, as a right for every citizen -- higher levels of education are viewed as a right. You might be able to "cool off" the expectations of people a little bit and you might also want to be more honest to people about what education really means. But you can't say "no, you can't go." Particularly, you can't say "no" to blacks and other minorities, who now -- suddenly, they're getting access to higher education -- you say "hold it - we made a mistake ... we're going to cut your access off now because you're not going to get a good job, and you really don't want this, anyway."

Well, I don't think we're going to get away with that. The alternative, then, is to change work as much as we can. And I think that we can change work, although it's not a simple thing to do -- but there are enough things that can be done with the workplace to make it more interesting and rewarding; to cut back on some of the problems where we're not meeting the expectations of these new workers -- these newly educated workers.

MERROW: You made an argument that you can't cut back on education -- but let me take the other side of that. Maybe less education would be a good idea; I mean, you yourself say that by 1980, only 20% of all jobs will require a college education. Today, half of the jobs don't require even a high school diploma -- so it seems to me there's a real argument there that's saying "well, why should we bother educating people?" They don't need it for their jobs ... all we're doing is raising and creating false expectations. Therefore, cut the budgets - etc., etc., etc.

O'TOOLE: Well, that goes back to the point that I was making earlier, that if you view the primary of purpose of education to prepare people for the role of work, then I would say there was some reason to accept the argument that you just offered. But, if you feel that there are some higher purposes of education, which I happen to believe, then you cannot follow that line of reasoning. If education is as much for leisure and family and citizenship as it is for work, then just because people aren't using those skills on the workplace -- in the workplace, is no excuse or rationale for cutting back education. I would hate to think that people would use the argument -- and I realize there was a danger in this -- that people were using the arguments that I'm making about the relationship of education to work as an excuse to cut back expenditures for education. I would argue just the opposite -- I think that the kind of world that we're getting into will need a better educated populace; we will need better educated people. We may not need them, necessarily -- they may not need that education necessarily on their jobs, but they're certainly going to need it as citizens, and they're going to need it to be able to cope with the enormous changes that are going to occur in their lives. They're going to need it to raise their children in a better way than our parents did with us.

MERROW: You're arguing, then, not for more technical education -- you're arguing for something what is usually called a liberal education; education to enable one to understand and thinking processes -- it sounds to me.

O'TOOLE: Yes ... exactly that. I feel that in the past, the people who have been most able to cope with change, with different kinds of jobs, with different kinds of environment ... have been the liberally educated. These people have "learned how to learn", and learning how to learn, I think, is the secret for survival over the next several decades ... that we cannot predict what the future is going to offer; that the pace and scope of technological and social and political change has increased to -- at such an alarming rate that we can't keep up with it and we can't really predict or forecast it. What we have to provide, I believe, is an educated population of people who know how to cope with

change -- whatever change may bring, they will be able to look at it and see what they need to learn, what they need to do to cope with it and step in and be able to get the resources that they need to survive. And I think that, really, a liberal education is the key to this -- now when I say liberal education, I'm not talking just about the traditional kind of education that people have gotten at Harvard and other places -- I'm talking about the type of education in which people may have more experiential kind of learning experiences. It's not possible, I don't think, just to learn to cope with change from -- from reading the classics. Young people may have to at a very early stage have some kind of exposure to the real world -- that's why I favor things like co-operative education.

What happens, though, is that they can take these practical experiences and they can bring them back into the classroom and the teachers can help them raise the level of these experiences to some higher level of abstraction -- and this is where the key to learning an education may be; that is, to take something that is practical -- and seems particular; to raise it to a higher level of abstraction so that when people are faced with a similar situation in the future, they'll know how to cope with it. I think that it's really coping skills that we're looking for.

MERROW: Now, I hear you saying that -- well, the schools really do have to change, because they as schools have been selling education as a ticket -- as a meal ticket to more money and a job with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards -- and the marketplace; the workplace has to change, also, where jobs have to be redesigned -- jobs have been heretofore designed with almost a kind of contempt for the workers, assuming they're dummies. They have to be redesigned so that there will be challenge, there will be interest in doing the work itself. With both those kinds of changes, you'll be moving toward a much better society. Now, that's all very nice, and I agree with you ... but it's not realistic, perhaps. So let me try out another solution -- one that we're much closer to. I mean how about a good depression? How about a war? Would that solve our problems?

O'TOOLE: Well, it wouldn't solve all of our problems -- that's for sure; of course, depressions do tend to lower people's expectations a bit, and I think that's what you probably had in mind. I don't think it's such a good idea that we lower people's expectations -- I would hope that young people and that the educational -- the goal of the educational process is to make people want something better than they currently have -- you wouldn't have progress if you didn't have that. I hope that we didn't lower expectations to the point that young people were willing to accept the kinds of jobs that they're offered. I think it is the purpose of education to have people aspire a little bit higher than they would without it. What I worry about is very, very unreal expectations; expectations that could never be met. Expectations that would lead to frustration; expectations that could lead to people thinking that "I'm a failure because I didn't achieve this" when really, it's a product of the social system.

ENSOR: The changes in the workplace might come about naturally -- though not necessarily quietly, if educated workers simply refuse to accept what they see as "dumb" jobs. But because there are more workers than there are jobs these days, the workplace is unlikely to change drastically. O'Toole doesn't want young college graduates to see themselves as failures merely because their college degrees haven't proven to be tickets to good jobs. But he does want people to keep on going to school -- and to keep on learning.

MERROW: But we've barely scratched the surface of the problem, David. First off, whether James O'Toole likes it or not, those who pay for our colleges and universities are doing so largely because they believe that

education increases personal productivity and the gross national product. It will be a cold day in Congress when that august body votes more money for education simply because it makes people's inner lives richer. That holds true for state legislatures, too.

There's another facet of the problem of schooling and jobs that we have to mention. Do you remember that doctoral student who, when asked why he was going to school -- asked rhetorically, "What else do you want me to do?" To me, that answer not only smacks of a legitimate fear of graduating, but also of a kind of arrogance -- probably unconcious. Half of the young people in the country never have the luxury of asking that question or of making that kind of choice.

ENSOR: For them, high school graduation -- if in fact, they even graduate, means going to work the next day or the next week; that is, if they can find work -- because unemployment among some groups of young people is as high as 40%.

MERROW: We haven't considered their expectations and we haven't asked whether they're underemployed. We know that schools -- in a rush to prepare a majority of young people for college -- are not preparing many of them to cope with a changing society.

Getting back to the problem of the lack of teaching positions for those holding PHD's, a great many doctorate holders are finding they are over-qualified; at least in terms of education for appropriate non-teaching jobs, and those with less education are getting the jobs. Was all that schooling worth it? Many graduate school administrators and students are giving that question serious consideration. Recently the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor held a conference to discuss alternative placement possibilities for doctorates who, more than likely, will not find teaching positions. Reporter Linda Tracy of member station WUOM in Ann Arbor, attended the conference and talked with Alfred Sussman -- Dean of the School of Graduate Studies -- and Tom McCourt, former member of the graduate student government, University of Michigan.

LINDA TRACEY INTERVIEWS DEAN SUSSMAN AND TOM MCCORT

TRACEY: What kind of things are universities doing for their doctoral students?

McCORT: We have been holding non-academic job hunting conferences here at the University of Michigan that were sponsored by the Dean and they've been sponsored by the placement service -- engineering placement, the extention service, and a real variety of people on campus who've been interested in this problem. And these conferences have helped to educate the graduate students about the problems that they're going to face when they go out, don't get an academic job, and try to get a non-academic job -- and we've had a great deal of success with these sorts of conferences. We're also interested in establishing an individual -- or several individuals to work with graduate students, specifically, on the problem of non-academic job placement. In this case now, we'd have a full-time professional career counselor who would help us solve that problem.

We also hope that the departments will be aware that their needs of their students and the needs of society have changed over the past, and we hope that the departments will perhaps change cognate requirements -- change degree requirements in other ways, and in that way, perhaps, prepare their graduate students better for both the academic and the non-academic job world.

TRACEY: Yea ... give me an example of a non-academic field that, for example, an English major would go in to that you would help the student get in to.

McCORT: Well, the English graduate student would think to himself or herself, "Well, let me see. I've got good ability in writing. I've got experience in teaching, which is to say, 'I am a calm and cool public speaker; I can organize material; I can be responsible for getting things in under a deadline; I work well with people'", and so forth and so on. And in that way, assess the really practical skills that are built up in an academic career, and then turn around and say "All right -- where in the non-academic world are these skills needed, and where would I be happy doing them?" So ... to use English as an example, although maybe many other liberal arts majors would work -- I might be interested in a career as an editor; I might want to go into some sort of journalism, I might want to be an advertising copywriter, or any other possibility. So, there are options out there in the non-academic world -- it's probably true that there are more options there than there are in the academic world.

TRACEY: Yea ... but isn't that true that a lot of PHD's that would like to get in to something like journalism or advertising do end up in jobs like construction work -- simply because it pays more?

SUSSMAN: Well, I'm not sure that "a lot" is a correct description. You read about occasional ones, but the data are really very bad, and I would question whether a lot have gone that route. I think to add to what Tom has said, one of the really most salient questions this university has to address as an institution that has prided itself upon a strong research function -- and upon the production of a large number of good PHD's -- is how far toward redesigning their PHD program, for example, it should go to meet these financial and job exigencies. Some people would asert that really, we should produce fewer PHD's, perhaps. But we shouldn't distort the nature of the PHD training too far in the direction of vocational training.

Now I'm not arguing that it isn't possible for a student to elect to take cognates -- and other appropriate ways of gaining a breath of experience; maybe even some internships, and the kinds we discussed at a previous conference. But there are other ways of doing it. It seems to me while protecting the merit and the prestige of the PHD, one could at the same time enlarge the opportunities available to students who want graduate work. You could strengthen and extend the Doctor of Arts degree, for example -- or, you could strengthen and extend the Masters degree route, and even go in to post-doctoral experience, which will permit people with traditional PHD's -- and there are a lot of them today who might wish to do this -- to go into areas of the kind that Tom has described. But I simply want to add a precautionary note that there are certain values to protect in the particular degrees we offer, and we have to be careful about those.

TRACEY: Yea. You don't want to prostitute the quality in order for economic considerations, in other words -- that's basically what you're saying. I want to know, what do you say to someone who has just gotten their doctorate and their isn't anything in the field that they would consider favorable to be doing right now, OK? Now, do they go back to school? Is that the best advice you can give to someone in that situation? Should they go back to school and wait it out or should they go into let's say, some kind of menial labor -- waitressing, something like that?

McCORT: Well, I would say neither -- probably. Now, that's a generalization. I would not right off the bat go back and think "I have to be retrained!" That's not right. At the same time, I wouldn't give up in utter despair and say, "OK -- I'm going to go out and be a menial laborer." That's not right. And, also, I guess, I would reject the old job-hunting style of following the want ads, mailing out a million or two million resumes, or something like that. I would stop instead, and say "All right. What are the skills -- the very tangible skills that I've got in the course of my graduate education?" And I'd really write them out to myself. And then I would think, "Now how can I translate

these into practical skills that employers are going to want to see?" And I would go to bat for myself, too -- then I would think, like -- "Where would I be happy applying these skills? What part of the country would I like to work in? What sort of business, or whatever?" And then, in that sense, I would aim directly at a type of job. Another thing which I would avoid doing was thinking, "I've been trained in an academic career -- I can't get a job -- I'm essentially useless -- I'll take anything, I'll do any general thing." That's absolutely the wrong approach. Instead, I would say to myself "What are the most specific skills that I can come up with?" Because employers want people with specific skills -- they don't want people who are willing to do just anything. So, I would assess myself as best I could -- as honestly as I could, and I would take a rather creative search for a job, rather than a kind of passive "numbers" game, hoping that a chance resume got me an interview, or simply taking the first thing that came along. So, we shouldn't despair and we should be more creative about the job search process.

TRACEY: Rather than just taking the first thing that comes up, you know.

SUSSMAN: I think Tom is just right. He's given some creative ways of handling a situation like that. Furthermore, I think one could state that we haven't seen the worst yet; in fact, while there is some unemployment, certain universities -- like Michigan -- have felt it less than other universities. And also, I anticipate -- although it may get worse, and these are the data of Alan Carter who is an expert of prognoses of these kinds -- or it may get worse ... the fact is that there are responses, behaviorally, of people to the situation, so it may control itself -- and therein lies one of the real questions for the university; that is to say, "what kinds of controls should it build into the situation?" As Tom has said earlier, at the moment, these behavioral responses have been spotty, and overall enrollment has risen -- and that's country-wise. Whether it's the depression phenomenon or not, it's very real -- but in view of the data of our graduate school, I now discover, much to my pleasure, that in fact -- behavioral responses are evident. The Department of Mathematics has controlled its enrollment to a certain extent. There are other departments, too, which are significantly affected today in employment -- and will be in the future, that have also done the same. On the other hand, certain fields where there are a lot of jobs available like geology and some of the biomedical fields -- continue to grow. But this is not to say that all fields are controlling their enrollment -- they're not, and that gives us a problem.

TRACEY: In other words, you're talking about controlling the number of students that come into the program in the first place -- and there's several ways to do that. Testing -- making the testing higher -- making it a higher requirement to get in, or I've also heard -- a moratorium -- non-PHD's for a year or so. What are your feelings on that ... would that work?

SUSSMAN: First of all, we have to be specific about the kinds of students we're talking about. I think we should restrict our attention at the moment to the PHD, because that's where the biggest problem lies, I think, at the present and -- well, in the future. First of all, the extent of the training is so great -- the amount of investment, both of the person and university and society is so great, so that's where I think the immediate problem lies, and there, I do believe we have to restrict our intake. But the question is how many students to admit and how you decide. And that's a rough one. Should we, for example, base it upon the number of jobs that exist in particular fields? That's difficult, because knowing whether the data are reliable is a question in itself. What about the distinction of the departments involved? That's one other route to take; you know, you say, "well -- if you're the number one department in the country, you have the right to continue to produce people -- and in larger numbers than a department that's more mediocre."

I don't wish to be too prescriptive -- I really don't know which balance to try to achieve, and I and my colleagues are working our way forward to understanding the issues well enough so that we can make meaningful decisions on this; in fact, President Flemming in his State of the University address, indicated that Mr. Rhodes and I begin the process by assembling data from what is actually happenning. And we're in the process of doing just that -- field by field.

TRACEY: You're talking about with current PHD's, then -- what is happening with them finding jobs.

SUSSMAN: Yes. You asked the question about what should you tell a PHD who is now entering the job market. In a sense, I think the harder question is what do we tell people who would like to begin graduate work today?

TRACEY: Have any answers?

SUSSMAN: I was hoping you wouldn't ask! I had to face that question when I spoke to a group of people from small colleges in Michigan -- our Michigan Scholars Conference, which we hold periodically. And I tried to level with them -- I think these facts cannot be disguised. On the other hand, I also firmly believe that people, if they have aspirations for higher educaction at any level, should say "I really want that education -- I want to go into it, but at the same time -- I recgonize the risks." Now I also believe -- accompanying that statement -- that excellent people, truly excellent people, will fare well in any event. But one can't be too specific about it; I can't play God and try to direct people's lives for them, but I do believe that we should somehow inform our students of the problems, then let them as mature persons understand the risks and then estimate what they think is the best course for themselves.

McCORT: I'd like to agree -- I think Dean Sussman is correct, and to look at this in a very, sort of large and statistical way -- over the course of the decade of the seventies, there will be about ten million people entering the job market, either with a B.A., and M.A. or a PHD, who have since finished an education now, and are on the job market. About a third of those people will essentially replace people who are leaving the job market -- almost on a one-to-one sense. About a third more will go into expansion -- because there will be simply new kinds of jobs -- new positions available, and something like a third -- maybe a little bit less than a third, will go into what you might call "educational upgrading" -- jobs which heretofore did not require academic distinction or a degree, will now be able to be filled with people who have these sorts of degrees. And this is probably an area that a lot of graduates in the future are going to find themselves ... they're being kind of upgraded, and the problem that they're going to face there is more likely one of underemployment, as opposed to unemployment. They will get jobs -- they won't starve.

TRACEY: They'll have to understand that their learning is more or less for learning's sake, and not for economic's sake, in other words.

McCORT: Yes.

ENSOR: Tom McCourt of the Graduate School of Student Government, and Alfred Sussman -- Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, both from the University of Michigan, talking with Linda Tracy of Public Station WUOM in Ann Arbor. During this hour, we've looked at the problem of underemployment. Next week, we'll examine unemployment. How can schooling or training affect unemployment.

BLAIR: If you'd like a transcript of this program, send 25¢ to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C., 20036. Ask for

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BLAIR: This program was produced with the special assistance of Kathy Premis Goldstein.

(CLOSING THEME)

CHILD: Options in Education is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University and National Public Radio.

BLAIR: Principal support for the program is provided by the National Institute of Education.

MERROW: Additional funds to NPR are provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and to IEL by the Carnegie Corporation, the U.S. Office of Education and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

BLAIR: This program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. For Options in Education, I'm Wendy Blair.

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OE 008 672